



ALMR User Council Meeting Minutes

Date: June 5, 2024

1. Attendance.

P = Present	T = Via Telephone	E = Excused	U = Unexcused	N/A = Not required
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User Council Members

Primary				
U	Atkinson	Ross	Mr.	Federal Non-DOD DOI, BLM-Alaska Fire Service
T	Berrian	Keith	Deputy Chief	Municipalities North, Chena Goldstream Fire & Rescue
E	Cole	Henry	Mr.	SOA DOT
E	Draves (In Process)	Kayla	MSgt	DOD USAF, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
T	Goggia-Cockrell	Tammy	Ms.	Municipalities Central, Vice Chair
T	Kalwara	Erann	Ms.	Municipalities Southeast
T	Kroona	Jon	Mr.	Federal Non-DOD DOJ, FBI
T	Nelsen	Scott	Mr.	SOA All Others, DMVA
U	Nelson	James	Officer	Federal Non-DOD All Others, US Forest Service
T	Rodriguez	Joe	MSgt	DOD USAF, Eielson AFB
T	Rockwell	John	Mr.	SOA DPS, Chair
T	Smith	Eric	Mr.	DOD US Army - Alaska

Alternate				
E	Brown	David	Mr.	Fed Non-DOD DOJ, FBI
U	Carter	Bobby	Mr.	Federal Non-DOD All Others, TSA
T	Clendenin	John	Mr.	SOA DOT
T	Edwards	Karl	Mr.	DHS, SOA All Others
N/A	Endres	Benjamin	Lieutenant	SOA Department of Public Safety
T	Green	Kyle	Fire Marshal	Municipalities North, University Fire Department
P	Goodman	Jim	Mr.	Municipalities Central, MatSu Borough
U	Hammer	Nathan	SMSgt	DOD USAF, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
U	Herman	Mary	Captain	DOD USAF, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
T	Higginbotham	Dave	MSgt	DOD US Army - Alaska
N/A	Maley	Christopher	TSgt	DOD USAF, Eielson AFB
U	Peace	David	Mr.	DOD USAF, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
T	Redington	Robert	Mr.	Federal Non-DOD DOI, US Fish and Wildlife Service
N/A	Dryden (In Process)	Josh	Sgt	Municipalities Southeast

Supporting Staff and Guests

P	Burnham	Mary	Ms.	Operations Management Office (OMO)
T	Butcher	Joel	Mr.	City of Wasilla



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P	Fahnestock	Nik	Mr.	System Manager (SMO)
P	Fussey	Paul	Mr.	Operations Manager
T	Garland	Eli Barry	Mr.	BLM
T	Haas	Zachary	Mr.	Motorola Solutions
T	Jones	Andy	Mr.	DOF & Fire Protection
P	Noel	Steve	Mr.	DHS
P	Reed	Dave	Mr.	Security Manager
P	Stormo	Scott	Mr.	APSCS Manager
T	Ulrich	Naomi	Ms.	Motorola Solutions
P	Woodall	Tim	Mr.	ALCOM PM/COR

2. Meeting Minutes and Action Items.

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action Items Assigned
Call to Order	Mr. John Rockwell called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.	
Roll Call	Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum of User Council (UC) members in attendance for the meeting.	
Introduction of Guests/Special Announcements	<p>John noted that Sgt. Josh Dryden, who was not in attendance today, was approved by the Executive Council for appointment to the ALMR User Council (UC).</p> <p>Paul introduced Mr. Steve Noel from Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). Steve commented that he went down to the Kenai Peninsula and the FirstNet coverage seemed pretty good and Verizon and other folks he talked to were very complimentary of the ALMR service.</p> <p>Paul also introduced Mr. Andy Jones, Special Projects Coordinator, from the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, who will be providing an informative presentation at the conclusion of the UC meeting.</p>	
Previous Meeting Minutes	<p>John asked the council members if they had a chance to read the minutes and asked if there were any questions, comments, or updates to the meeting minutes. There were no responses.</p> <p>Mr. Rockwell requested a motion and a second to approve the meeting minutes.</p> <p>Motion: Approve the May 1 monthly User Council meeting minutes.</p>	



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	<p>Motion: Fire Marshal Kyle Green. Second: Ms. Tammy Goggia-Cockrell.</p> <p>There were no objections or further discussion. The motion passed.</p>	
Issues & Risks Log	Review	Resolution
	<p>John asked for a review of the issues and risk log.</p> <p>Paul stated the update is concerning the Zone 2 master site and this item was put back on the issues and risks log. As noted on the log, it was taken off 29 February, but after a meeting with the Army, it was placed back on the log on 28 May. It was reopened for confirmation that all repairs and replacements were completed. What has been heard is that the batteries were replaced but there might have been some issues with the UPS transfer switch. Paul asked Nik if he had more of an update.</p> <p>Nik noted that was all he heard. It is just a problem with the transfer switch between the battery and commercial power, and they do not know what is wrong with it, but they are investigating.</p>	
Action Items	Updates	Action Items Assigned
	<p>Mr. Rockwell asked Mr. Paul Fussey if there were any updates to the action items since the last meeting.</p> <p>Paul noted once the APX NXT radios are up and running, which is a carryover from October 2023 meeting, that's still on the books were waiting for that one. If you look at items #2 and #3, Paul sent the draft letter, prepared for the GCI and the commercial circuits, over to APSCS, and the UC Chair for approval. Once those are back, they will be sent out to AT&T, Verizon, MTA, and specifically GCI for the commercial circuits, because there are still issues with GCI. Hopefully, these items will be completed by the next meeting.</p>	



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	<p>that are signed with the cost share amount. Agreements have been sent to DoD and the Federal Non-DoD agencies and as they are coming in; they are being sent over to Terry with APSCS for their proper billing and filing.</p>	
<p>Upgrades</p>	<p>3. The Motorola team continues to install Juniper routers around the state, their crews are working up north right now. The SMO has completed 17 PMIs, which includes both drivable and helicopter sites. Of course, the weather they are having now, this heavy rain around the state up to and including the southeast, there is a little bit of a damper on our PMIs and replacing Juniper routers. They are soldiering through this best they can.</p>	
<p>May Document Reviews</p>	<p>4. Paul noted there were no document reviews for May. There are several coming up in June, but for right now there's nothing for May. Paul asked if there were any questions before moving over to the metrics.</p> <p>Kyle Green said, thanks for the updates. He appreciates the involvement of users, and inquired if the User Council representatives, that represent those users, being included when those connections through email chains and conversations are being made to get more users to participate?</p> <p>Paul responded they are not, but he noted what they do is when they ask to be included in the distro email list, he talked to them. He gets all their information, and then Mary sends them all the information that they need for the meeting.</p> <p>Kyle stated he appreciates that and that he is coming from a point of introducing those folks to their user representatives. That way the chain of conversation is kept and then the representative can engage with them directly. That just seems to make sense, and if there's something local then the representative can help with that as a User Council representative. He wants to be involved at that level and then maybe take a little bit off somebody else's plate, if that's possible, there is a benefit there for all of us.</p>	
<p>April System Metrics</p>	<p>5. Paul briefed that looking at the system performance, monthly groups and individual calls, the total number was 1,515,000, which is down from last year. The monthly push to talks was 2,507,078, which is down from last year. They are looking through these numbers because they are down</p>	



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<p>Other Items</p>	<p>300,000 from last year. They are trying to figure out, why they dropped so much but he does not have answer.</p> <p>The monthly busies were 710 and he will go into why in a little bit. One of the main reasons is that 18 sites are below Three 9s, but remember teams are working on the Juniper upgrades right now. There were also a large number of PMIs completed last month. The list of Three 9s shows that there were a lot of PMIs, power upgrades, CCGW upgrades, link testing, Juniper router installs, so there is nothing out of the ordinary or looks like they have any major issues. The one issue that arose was at Seward, there was an interference from the Norwegian Cruise ship as it came into port. The interference had not only affected ALMR sites in Seward, but also affected the railroad. ALMR contacted the cruise line personally, and the FCC was also contacted. Paul was told through some emails, there were also some issues with the Norwegian Cruise ships down in Southeast interfering with AT&T cell phone towers. ALMR is working with the company to make sure that this does not happen again.</p> <p>The subscriber count is a total of 31,530 and this completed the metrics.</p> <p>Kyle commented that he does not know if this is the proper place to bring it up, but he saw Birch Hill and Ester Dome on the Three 9s system status and it was noted for that area in Fairbanks that there is ongoing interference. He asked if that is the testing that is being referenced in that daily email or is there something else going on that's affecting that area's performance?</p> <p>Paul noted that it is the testing going on and Nik confirmed and agreed with Paul's comment.</p> <p>Nik also briefed that there is additional interference coming from a radio station as well, which is also part of the issue, and that he has been working with Tim Woodall and others to deal with the issue.</p> <p>Kyle thanked Nik and Paul and stated he will wait to hear more.</p> <p>6. Paul said that Nik and the ALMR team have been coming in at 4:00 a.m. the last couple of days to finish up the quarterly zone control rollovers, which were accomplished June 4th and 5th without any issues. He thanked everyone for their patience and the dispatch centers as that was completed.</p>	
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	<p>Paul noted there was a military exercise back on May 20th and 21st and when the OMO, SMO, and APSCS were made aware of the potential military exercise, that would have affected the Zone 2 master site, ALMR worked with the military members and the local agencies to raise awareness. He appreciated Kyle Green's assistance with the local Fairbanks fire chiefs. The master site for Zone 2 was not affected and that was due to everyone's cooperation and willingness to talk to each other and everybody's work and participation in that was appreciated.</p> <p>Paul's closing statement for his report was, tomorrow is the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings, June 6th, 1944.</p> <p>Keith had a couple of comments about the Birch Hill event and stated he appreciates the glazing over the coordination, but from their end it sure did not seem like that. It seemed like more of a case of the DoD component decided that they were shutting down the Birch Hill master site with basically very little or no notice and was going to knock most emergency communications down in the Fairbanks area. If they have that potential, he has some serious concerns about having Birch Hill be the master site for the Fairbanks area. They were not ready and had to do a lot of last-minute scrambling for something that should have been planned out well in advance.</p> <p>Paul stated that Keith was correct he did glaze over the incident for the User Council. Paul agreed it was short notice and he and Nik were scrambling, making a lot of phone calls to the DoD and Mr. Woodall got involved along with DPS personnel in the Fairbanks area. The ALMR team has met with the DoD and with the garrison commander. The DoD had little knowledge of what would happen if that site went down and now, they have been made aware of ramifications. They will be working with the OMO in the future on anything that has the potential of interfering with the Zone 2 master site.</p> <p>Keith commented that hopefully something can be put in place so that becomes not just personal knowledge from the current staff there at Fort Wainwright, but also institutionally. Otherwise, ALMR should be looking at some way to separate that master site from the military component, because basically they were going to have half the agencies in the Fairbanks area going to lose communications. That area had three police agencies with no communications, because, come to find out, they had let their VHS systems lapse. It was a mess.</p>	
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	<p>Paul stated to Keith that it was not just the Fairbanks area, it would have been all of Zone 2, which is everything north of Denali Highway.</p> <p>Keith mentioned Fairbanks police, North Pole police, and all the troopers, were going to lose communications completely, which caused a lot of concerns.</p> <p>Mr. Woodall briefed there are some assumptions being made that the backup battery plant would or would not work. There cannot be a situation where there is fear of the system going down. ALMR must feel confident and from time-to-time test that if the system did go down that the backup battery plant would work. That the system would come back online and then as they move forward into the new contract and new requirements, they will be looking closer at how to make the two controllers resilient. They rely on each other or other types of solutions for the backup power capability. If it were to fail, it would be able to then switch to another controller that would handle both zones from that perspective. ALMR understands your concern and understands the seriousness of it. Your concern is appreciated and from that perspective it is being driven home to the DoD level. Tim noted one of the things everyone probably understands is that there is a constant changeover of senior officers for the military about every two years. That is why making sure that there is a process in place that is understood and quite frankly the impact of what would happen if it were to be lost. He stated they will do better at making sure those things are made aware and they will address the resiliency issue.</p> <p>Keith said that is appreciated.</p> <p>Scott Stormo added, for those that have been around long enough, part of that resiliency opportunity that Tim mentioned is that Motorola has a product/service called DSR that for quite a long time the infrastructure owners have not elected to fund.</p> <p>Scott Stormo continued on to comment it is not inexpensive, but there is redundancy at each of these master sites to back up the Motorola equipment. However, if power is lost to a site, there is no redundant power other than generators or batteries. Even though exercises of the generators are done weekly, sometimes once they come under load, it is suddenly discovered after an hour that the generator starts overheating. Those are things that don't necessarily show up during the weekly exercise. Things can happen.</p>	
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	<p>Scott stated he has always been a huge fan of the idea that this is a big risk to the system, and there should be something like DSR. Unfortunately, everyone waits for something bad to happen before starting to think about that and talking about it again. Scott will ask for it again, at least from the state side, to have Motorola give us a proposal on what it would cost to do that, put that capability on ALMR. What it means is if one of those sites (Zone 1 or Zone 2) went down, all the sites, all the consoles hooked to the master site, would fail over to the other zone controller. So, if you didn't lose them both, you would continue to have ALMR after probably a 30 second delay, or whatever period of all that traffic rerouting. He stated again that it is not inexpensive, but he is of the opinion it is worth it.</p> <p>Scott mentioned that an example was given of how a few police departments abandoned their legacy solution, which is not a bad thing if you're relying on an enterprise solution, it is a lot of money to do these things and having backup solutions to somebody else's is expensive as well. He said if there is ever an opportunity to advocate to government entities to make this more robust and look at things like DSR that you are aware of that came about from this situation, please advocate through those avenues that are available.</p> <p>Paul clarified to the group that DSR is an acronym for Dynamic System Resilience.</p> <p>Kyle said thanks to everybody for the comments and thanks to Keith for bringing up those concerns. It is not the first time the situation has had to be visited and he appreciated Paul reaching out. Thanks for bearing with him and his sporadic communications as it was his first day of leave. He was up on Birch Hill running around with a bunch of Tiger Cubs, so he was doing what he could to connect the right folks. One thing he did not mention, to Paul, was that he got involved with the Fairbanks North Star Borough Emergency Operations Division and one of their leaderships was down at JBER meeting with some leadership down there and was helping at that avenue as well to help keep systems online, even if it was for two hours. Kyle cannot speak for the police chiefs, but in his communications with the Fire Chief Association locally, they are fully acknowledging that they need to revisit their communications plans and PACE planning. That is the discussion that he will be helping to facilitate locally since there was a plan in place for if ALMR went down what there was to do, but kind of along the same lines the change of leadership has caused that plan to be forgotten. He stated</p>	
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	<p>they are resurrecting it and revisiting it with current capabilities here locally.</p> <p>Kyle also appreciated Scott's conversation about the DSR tech and available resiliency to be added. He said though, that funding is always going to be a challenge for us, and he encourages coordinated advocacy. He reiterated that he has done this in the past and that there are very powerful advocacy allies with the fire and police chiefs, and if there is a coordinated ask, as a group, go to the Police Chiefs Association, the Fire Chiefs Association, the State Chiefs Association, where there are identified gaps and coordinate our advocacy efforts. He feels they can have some positive improvement to the system and funding. He does not know if that needs to be a subcommittee, or something to put on the agenda to bring back up here in new business. Maybe it needs to be talked about offline before that is done, but there are improvements needed, especially from the Northern region to improve resiliency, and what does that look like for the Northern region? Does that mean another master site if the main one goes down, which is something that should be talked about, so that a two-hour outage should not cripple us. Everyone should be prepared for that stuff and relying on other systems, and on that note Kyle says Smart Connect, which he cannot wait for that to be going because that is another tool in the toolbox to help us maintain a resilient system and give us options.</p> <p>Eric Smith introduced himself and stated he was recently appointed to the US Army Installations as the User Council member, and that he completely acknowledges everyone's concerns. He apologized on behalf of the Army and commented that the Army is working with Mr. Tim Woodall and the local Garrison Command team to try to resolve some of these operational communications problems. They are significant, and as Mr. Woodall mentioned, the Army does go through a change of command every two years, so it seems like they must reeducate these new Garrison Command teams. This whole outage was related to an 11th Airborne exercise for mission requirements.</p> <p>The command team now understands that shutting down that site has implications across the state. They do not see it happening again in the future, but they will continue to work as a team to try to resolve that issue and upgrade the power systems to make them more resilient. Eric just wanted to add that to the group.</p>	
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	John noted no comments heard and said to Paul, “thank you very much for your report and thank you very much for the reminder of D Day tomorrow.” He appreciated the conversation regarding Zone 2, and he can contest that, yes, Scott Stormo is a tremendous advocate for doing the right thing. Scott has been talking about redundancy within the system and pushing as hard as he can for funding, but unfortunately it does come down to the, you know, funding line and ALMR is doing the best they can. John also thinks the advocacy from the police and fire chiefs’ associations could help. John thanked Kyle for that conversation as well.	
System Management Office	Mr. Nik Fahnestock, System Manager	Action Items Assigned
	<p>Nik noted that he is going to keep his brief short and sweet. Paul mentioned that he and Nik had been here since 4:00 a.m. for the past couple of days and not to, you know, repeat things that Paul has already mentioned, he stated he has nothing additional to add.</p> <p>John asked if there were any questions for Nik, which there were none.</p>	
State of Alaska	Mr. Scott Stormo	Action Items Assigned
	<p>Scott Stormo briefed that the only thing he had to add was Smart Connect. He reached back out to the Motorola Vice-President of the federal market who is sponsoring the FedRamp (Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program) approval for those cloud services that will include location on push to talk and Smart Connect. They, just in the last week had some more interactions with the FedRamp team and their estimated time for approval is September. Scott made a comment to David Reed, stating has he tried to prepare the paperwork for when approval is reached?</p> <p>David noted as far as our side goes, it is already in the package as approved for the FedRamp approval.</p> <p>Scott asked if it would be able to be turned on at that point and David replied in the affirmative.</p> <p>John asked if there were any questions for Scott, which there were none.</p>	



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Department of Defense	Mr. Timothy Woodall	Action Items Assigned
	<p>Tim briefed he had just a note for those who are participating in the State of Alaska's contract for infrastructure operations and maintenance and operations management, that the state will be exercising the option year for contract starting the 1st of July, even if you have not yet processed your membership agreement, be prepared for your invoice and to then process your funds through to the state. Tim has already sent an email identifying your costs for the two contracts. If you are anticipating issues not being able to fund your portion of the contract cost, please identify that within the next week. There being no issues, then Scott can go ahead and execute the contract option year 7 of the contract.</p> <p>John inquired if that was directed to the DoD entities and Tim responded in the affirmative.</p> <p>John asked if there were any questions for Tim, which there were none.</p>	
User Council Representative Reports	Represented Areas	Action Items Assigned
SOA DOT SOA DPS SOA All Others	<p>Mr. Rockwell called for updates from DOT, DPS, and all other SOA entities and there was no response from any of the sectors.</p>	
DoD US Army Installations DoD JBER DOD Eielson	<p>Mr. Rockwell called for updates from the DoD components and there were no updates from any of the sectors.</p>	



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Federal Non-DoD DOI Federal Non-DoD DOJ Federal Non-DoD All Others	<p>Mr. Rockwell called for updates from the Federal Non-DoD, DOI, DOJ, and all others and there were no responses from any of the sectors.</p>	
Munis-Central Munis-North Munis-Southeast	<p>1. Ms. Tammy Goggia-Cockrell had no updates.</p> <p>2. Fire Marshal Kyle Green asked if anybody was attending the 5x5 Summit, drop him a line and he will look to connect.</p> <p>3. Lt. Erann Kalwara had no updates.</p>	
New Business	Discussion	Action Items Assigned
CISA – FEMA Region 10 RECCWG	<p>Steve mentioned that for the remainder of today and tomorrow down at the Egan Center, there are some pretty good discussions taking place regarding cybersecurity. There is some training tomorrow, if anybody's interested, they may still have spaces. It is a pretty good event, and they will have a lot of different vendors there, well worthwhile. Steve commented that they have some information that can be distributed if there is an interest in getting in contact with some of the folks that work with the Cyber group within CISA and how to get some free services. Cyber Hygiene is one of the free scanning services that is easy to set up, if anybody is interested, he just needs to contact their Cyber Security Analyst.</p> <p>Steve just wanted to share that as everyone is becoming more knowledgeable about different events happening especially on ransomware, which there have been a few of those up here in Alaska. Then on the radio side, they are starting to see some of those specific to radio-to-radio systems. They had one in Oregon and some in Missouri just a month or so ago. Try to be careful because a lot of it is with software that is out of date or systems lacking security passwords, things of that nature.</p>	



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	<p>John thanked Steve and commented that it is always appreciated when you bring up excellent training, which John had heard a few things about tomorrow's training, one being Cyber Awareness, which sounded very interesting. John asked if someone would like to attend, would it be okay if Steve could leave information with Mary or Paul so they could get in touch with them.</p> <p>Steve said he would do that, and Paul responded that he has the contact information and will send it out to the group.</p> <p>John reminded members on the call that there will be a presentation by Andy from the State Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention after the meeting adjourns.</p>	
Next Meeting	Discussion	
	John stated the next meetings are currently scheduled for July 3 and August 7.	
Adjournment	Discussion	
	<p>Mr. Rockwell stated he would entertain a motion for adjournment.</p> <p>Motion: Adjourn the June 5 User Council meeting.</p> <p>Motion: Jim Goodman Second: Ms. Tammy Goggia-Cockrell</p> <p>There were no objections or further discussion and the motion passed.</p> <p>The meeting was adjourned at 2:14 p.m.</p>	